

Dear Taylor, Branch

12/15/74

Lewis Lapham has clarified most of what your silence left uncertain. That was helpful because I have sold one one-time, non-exclusive use and more are in prospect.

However, some did not involve Harper's and while I could take your silence as meaning the other things you mentioned are off, I'd rather know. As I told you and should have shown, I'm old fashioned in some ways. I trust people, as I trusted you to preserve confidence with what I thought could help you on your book. When I give my word, directly or indirectly, I try to keep it. When you spoke to me about David Obst I did nothing thereafter about anything we discussed that you even suggested might interest him.

However, when you remained silent, even though I know this can mean that you are out of town and/or quite busy, with a direct movie approach on some of my earlier work I did not call you or Obst. Someone else, not an agent but with connections, is handling that. I think there can be a movie and that if it is begun soon it can appear at a very topical moment.

When you suggested that Obst could be interested in my Watergate book, I told you he might find a conflict in it. You thought otherwise because you said you would bring us together after the Sunday or holiday you were to dine with him and his wife (who is the cousin of a friend of mine).

The more immediate of the two things that prompt this letter is MacKenzie's story in today's Post, A26, "Sentences Divide Attorneys." It deals with Dean's sentence and his lawyer's efforts to get it reduced. Alleged misleading of the FBI seems to loom large in this. In the first version of my Watergate book I have a chapter almost small book length that I think is relevant and could be useful to Shaffer. Should it be, I think one of the results, as it could influence what could happen to a book, is obvious. On my own I may or may not do something. Time will control. But if Obst is going to have any interest I ought not do anything. Other such situations are not improbable. So, I would appreciate knowing, either way.

Dean's lawyer, by the way, is not experienced in covering up. He did a rather professional job when he was a Warren Commission lawyer. I go into it in part in my second Whitewater book. It dealt with a vital bit of the earliest evidence.

Interest in the current book, despite no money for ads or promotions and no review copies, remains good. With sales from radio broadcasts all made from here and by phone, in the first two weeks there was enough cash to repay 20% of the loan to the bank. With what this ancillary use will bring I'm getting out a mail. I have a mailing list of the several thousand who have written me. Despite the thinness of the shoestring I remain hopeful that we will at least pay the bank off. With luck, more.

And what is unique on this subject, I have not even heard of a single snide comment. Coupled with this is an often heavy play. If I didn't tell you, it was often front-page news. The Sacramento Bee had more than 40 column inches on the front page plus a jump. Radio calls have included the CBC net and individual stations as far away as Honolulu, again for the first time. These combine to tell me that attitudes and the situation are changing. Aside from what this can mean to the current book, I think it is a promising forecast of the possibilities the other one I discussed with you.

I don't mind if everything is negative. But I would appreciate knowing it.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg